

# Ministry in Times of Crisis



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## CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS

Office of the Chief of Naval Operations  
Washington, D.C. 20350-2000

Dear Colleagues in Ministry,

One of the challenges of Sea Services ministry is the inevitable crisis. While we prepare for contingencies, crisis ministry tests our ability to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. Navy chaplains have a proud history of immediate and compassionate response. The commander who doubts the value-added by a chaplain almost invariably "becomes a believer" when calamity strikes and the chaplain takes action.

This issue of *THE NAVY CHAPLAIN* focuses on "Ministry in Times of Crisis." In an article titled, "Creating New Paradigms for Crisis Ministry," Chaplain Mitch Shranz highlights the need for a war fighting military ready to respond to operations other than war. Chaplain Steve Evans applies our vision statement to his ministry in training military health care providers.

Navy chaplains around the world united and responded magnificently to the terrorist bombing of USS COLE, which shook our Navy and our Nation. Chaplain George Ridgeway and his staff report their initial response. Chaplain Cartus Thornton, aboard COLE the week prior to the blast, tells of his ministry among the crew. (The next issue of *THE NAVY CHAPLAIN* will report on ministry to COLE family members within the United States.)

Crisis ministry often has international ramifications. The Gulf Air Flight 072 crash is an example. The USS GEORGE WASHINGTON religious ministry team, along with the rest of the ship's crew, gained the respect and admiration of the Persian Gulf nations for their response. An account of their actions is reported through the eyes of Chaplain Eric Verhulst. (This incident reminds us that we may know little about the faith traditions of those we serve.)

This issue of *THE NAVY CHAPLAIN* also includes LT Youssef Aboul-Enein's overview of Islamic practices with regard to death and burial, the story of how RPCS (FMF/SW) Cindy Blankenship "survived" CREST, and the celebration of a Navy Chaplain Corps first: Chaplain Eileen O. Norrington became the first woman in our Corps to complete a full career, retiring with twenty-three years of Naval service.

I know these stories will inspire you as you continue to deliver life-transforming service that marks the work of Navy chaplains around the globe.

Fraternally,



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## The Navy Chaplain

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Editor: LCDR Walt East, CHC, USN



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## Creating New Paradigms for Crisis Ministry

by CDR Mitchell Schranz, CHC, USN



NOTE: *Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), Humanitarian Response and Disaster Relief are not synonymous, but for the purposes of this article "Crisis Operations" will be the generic term used to cover all those categories.*

A long time ago the Kotzker Rebbe gathered his followers together and challenged them: "Be like the Disciples of Fire and not like the Disciples of Pelz." This cryptic charge made no sense to them, yet they knew their Rebbe never chose his words lightly. They were certain their Rebbe was telling them something profound. Finally, it was explained by one of the followers. A Disciple of Pelz is the disciple of the fur pelt coat. When such a person becomes cold, he puts on a heavy fur coat, warms himself up and is content. When a Disciple of Fire becomes cold, he runs out into the storm, into the darkness of the forest, chops down a tree and drags it back home. He then cuts the wood, builds a fire...and he warms everyone up and lights their way with that fire!

-Chassidic Teaching

**"My position is simple: Any good done in  
God's Name for God's people is ministry!"**

—John Cardinal O'Connor

### Introduction

In the past decade, Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), Humanitarian Operations, Multi-National Peacekeeping and Disaster Relief have become part of our vocabulary. Chaplains and RPs, like the military itself, are still learning how to function in the dim twilight that lies between combat operations and operations other than war. It is something not yet fully understood by a force that once defined itself almost entirely by its traditional war fighting role. In these crisis operations, things are radically different than in an all-out shooting war. The enemy comes to our personnel in the form of starving children, warring ethnic factions, volcanic firestorms, live minefields, and ancient hatreds. "Victory" may be nothing more than getting a few planeloads of MREs and medical supplies to the hopeless refugees who are caught in the crosshairs of a tragedy not of their own making. The misery and degradation of thousands of people may claim little more of the world's conscience than a 25 second sound-byte on CNN.

The chaplains and RPs who are charged with delivering ministry in this tinderbox environment face a big job. They must confront all this misery while keeping hope alive in the Marines and Sailors whose youthful ideals are coming under fire; the refugees who may endure unimaginable degradation; and the nervous commanders who know that the slightest



misstep can easily turn a humanitarian operation into a combat operation. In the end, however, ministry in a crisis operation is an experience that will transform the soul and forever change the way we think about humanity's place in a hostile world. It is an experience that will afford us the opportunity to become a Disciple of Fire and to do much good for God's people in God's Name.

### Historical Perspectives

The cynics would say that America carries forth these operations simply because they are in her best interests to do so. When the potential rewards of these operations do

not justify the cost in lives and resources, we do not commit ourselves. They subscribe to Winston Churchill's dictum: *"Among nations there are no friendships, only common interests."* Still, a good argument can be made by students of history that the United States has an astonishing record of righteous intervention around the world, even when the price far exceeded the tangible gains. I must believe that—like individual people—nations can choose to behave morally or otherwise. America has (yes, with some exception) chosen the path of righteousness. Thus the chaplain is in a unique position to remind his people of the greater meaning of the sacrifices they are being asked to make: that America is a great, decent and big-hearted nation that is committed to human justice. As President Eisenhower reflected years after the Marshall Plan and the Berlin Airlift: *"Those nations who had the means to help (rebuild Europe) lacked the will. Those who had the will, lacked the means. Only America had the will and the means."* Through our national will to do



some good, a shattered continent was rebuilt, and the world was spared another global conflagration. From the perspective of history, then, it is safe to say that a small investment to provide peacekeeping troops, food, and medical supplies today, can prevent a bloody confrontation tomorrow. Can there be a greater national ministry than this?

As an aside, please allow a personal reflection. Growing up in the South Bronx in the fifties, I vividly recall that whenever a soldier walked through the neighborhood, people would greet him warmly and invite him to dinner; children would stop playing stickball to gather round and be near him; and teen age girls would cast admiring glances. Why? Because many of the people in the neighborhood were Holocaust survivors. They remembered and often spoke about the gallant GIs who liberated the concentration camps and provided to them a lifeline of food, medical attention and hope. That is the powerful good of humanitarian operations and what this is all about. Humanitarian Operations are America!



### Spiritual Readiness

The dangers inherent in a crisis operation are real and replete with the potential for violence. The chaplain and RP can do much good in this volatile environment by serving not only in the traditional pastoral support role, but also as a moderator, bridge-builder, interpreter of local religion and culture, and ombudsman. The chaplain is poised to work with our own personnel, refugees, medical evacuees, NGO (non-governmental organization) representatives, and local clergy. Each operation is different from the other and generalities as to how to minister are hard to make. There is one piece of advice that I believe is universally relevant: the chaplain must strengthen himself spiritually before he finds himself in the quagmire of operations. It is vital that we each hammer out a spiritual framework from which we can draw strength later on.

General George S. Patton said that *"courage is fear that has said its prayers."* Perhaps the general was saying that fear is a normal, rational response to danger, but prayer can overcome that natural response. We know intellectually that this is true, that spiritual preparedness is a vital component of our calling to ministry in the Armed Forces. We know that spiritual preparedness can help us overcome a lot of hardship and privation. Yet, why is it that so often we forget to strengthen the spiritual foundation that will help us during moments of extreme hazard? Whether it is fear of confronting the inner vulnerabilities that, to varying degrees, exist within us all; whether it is the perception (erroneous, in my opinion) that personal inventories are so much in the realm of that "touchy-feely stuff" which many of us shy away from—no matter. We must minister to our own spiritual being *before* we deploy, not when we deploy. Each of us has a unique discipline addressing personal spiritual needs, but we'd probably all include prayer, Bible study, quiet reflection and, if possible, attendance at a religious retreat. I always keep a copy of Victor Frankel's *Man's Search For Meaning* handy because the insights I've drawn from it have been helpful in difficult operations. There is no cookie-cutter approach in

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## *“OPERATIONALIZING” OUR VISION STATEMENT*

by CDR J. Steven Evans, CHC, USN

The Navy Chaplain Corps' Vision Statement: *“Devoted to God and Country, we unite to deliver innovative, life transforming service throughout and beyond the Sea Services.”*

The new Chaplain Corps Vision Statement, published in August 2000, brought about an epiphany experience for me. I sensed God speaking to me about how to serve the people at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS or USU).

In both combat and peacetime, medical emergencies and crises tend to go hand in hand. These rank among the times when people are most vulnerable and most open to ministry. At no other time can we have a greater opportunity to impact their lives. We bring hope to those in crisis. At such times, the physician and medical staff who understand the role and value of the chaplain can play a vital part in a chaplain's effectiveness with patient and family. For this reason, my ministry at USU must include training future military physicians to see chaplain caregivers as colleagues – an important part of the healing team. It also must include educating them in medical ethics and the “human” side of medicine.

### **What is USU?**

The founder of USU, Congressman F. Edward Hébert, called it, “The West Point of Military Medicine.” Since its inception in 1972, this remarkable Department of Defense (DOD) institution has graduated over 3,000 military medical physicians and advanced practice nurses dedicated to career service in the Army, Navy, Air Force, or U.S. Public Health Service. The School of Medicine, sixteenth in size among 125 in the U.S., is committed to excellence of medical care in the field, fleet, and garrison. You can surf its homepage at [www.usuhs.mil](http://www.usuhs.mil).

### **Chaplain Corps Vision at USU**

In addition to the lectures, labs and exams of medical school at the campus, our faculty, students and staff conduct quarterly field exercises with combat scenarios to train in military and emergency medicine. This article focuses on

how Religious Program Specialist Second Class (RP2) Jessie Olitoquit and I apply our vision during ministry in garrison and in the field at what USU calls OPERATION BUSHMASTER.

*“Devoted to God and Country,...”* This is the foundation and source from which I operate daily. Renewing my devotion to God and my love for America keeps me fresh and focused on serving as a channel of God's hope, grace and blessings.

*“...we unite to deliver...”* What a stimulating privilege and opportunity it is to unite with other chaplains and RPs as a team to meet the diverse religious needs at USU. At the training site for BUSHMASTER in San Antonio, Texas, RP2 Olitoquit and I coordinate with local Army chaplains to provide worship opportunities in the field. We take to the field what helps to bring people to God.

Further, we unite with healthcare providers to serve the patients and families. My ecclesiastical mission must support the command mission.

We seek ways to integrate the chaplain's duties with the medical duties in a way that will complement their procedures.

*“...innovative,...”* More than any other assignment, this one has challenged Petty Officer Olitoquit and me to be more innovative. As a DOD training command for graduate medical education, its closest counterparts are the Naval Academy, West Point, and the Air Force Academy. However, all of these are undergraduate institutions with students who, in contrast to USU students, live on campus.

While at the campus, I lead two different series of monthly discussion groups for faculty and students. One is on current issues in medical ethics. The other is on the use of, or referral to, legitimate spiritual resources in order to help patients. In the latter group, we process the appropriate, professional integration of future physicians' own spiritual journey into their medical education and clinical practice.

The Unit Ministry Team (UMT) plays an integral part in field training scenarios by modeling the value of crisis ministry at work in the delivery of emergency combat medicine. During faculty debriefings with the medical



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## *Initial Response Ministry Aboard USS COLE in Yemen*

By CDR George A. Ridgeway, CHC, USN  
with LCDR Michael A. Mikstay, CHC, USNR  
and RP2(SW) Jonathan D. Leeper, USN



“This was not an act of cowardice; this was a calculated act of war by a determined enemy.” Those were the words of Vice Admiral Charles W. Moore Jr., COMUSNAVCENT/COMFIFTHFLT, spoken on the fantail of the USS COLE (DDG 67), one day after it was severely damaged by a terrorist attack while moored to a refueling dolphin in the port of Aden, Yemen. Seventeen COLE Sailors were dead, with eight remains buried in the blast wreckage. Forty-two were wounded, and most of them had been evacuated to local hospitals. Chaplain Mike Mikstay and I stood among this crew that had become our cherished flock. Tension was still extremely high as the threat of additional attacks had not been ruled out.

The day before, I had ridden my bicycle in from my home in Mahooz to work in Jufair as usual. The duty rooster crowed as I went through a little village. A couple of kids were dragging their book bags toward school. A few women were out walking in the cool of the morning, veiled completely in black, of course. It seemed like another normal day in the island country of Bahrain in the Arabian Gulf. None of us had any idea that in nearby Yemen, terrorists had hidden hundreds of pounds of explosives in a common boat with the intention of destroying an American warship. I arrived at work early, but didn’t get back home until over a week later.

Word of the attack reached me by word of mouth as I walked across Naval Support Activity, Bahrain after lunch. I went directly to the Tactical Flag Command Center to get the details. Our forces were being immediately dispatched to support and assist the ship and crew. The whole staff wanted to be on the first aircraft headed for Yemen. I pressed the issue of chaplain support. Everyone had been behind the idea in theory, but in this real situation it was VADM Moore who put me on the first plane and Chaplain Mikstay on the next. I was thankful to have a boss who really valued chaplain ministry. I grabbed a few items from my office and my wife threw together a travel bag. It was a bit tense. We were all in civilian clothes to keep a low profile. The team of Marines with us looked strange carrying all their weapons, yet dressed in blue jeans.

The Yemen Airport jolted us into the reality of the situation. We landed about ten hours after the bombing. The host nation, understandably, wasn’t too happy about a group of American military entering their country on short notice,

and was slow to let us out of the airport. While our Task Force Commander worked on sorting through the diplomatic tangle, I learned the value of being on the first plane. A critically injured Sailor arrived at the airport by ambulance. I was able to talk and pray with him as he was loaded aboard a French medical evacuation aircraft. Shortly after, the bodies of several American Sailors arrived to be put aboard our P-3. It is sometimes easy to feel marginalized as a chaplain, but the sense of God’s presence we bring to these crisis situations makes us highly valued.

It was after midnight when we were finally permitted to leave the airport. My first thought was to head for the ship, but the Commanding Officer had communicated that the crew was down for the night and the chaplain should wait until morning to come aboard. At our temporary headquarters, I met American missionaries in Aden, Dr. Roger Bruggink and his wife, Adilee. They had heard of the attack, cancelled their travel plans and courageously visited some of our injured at a nearby hospital. I joined up with our Force Medical Officer to visit the remaining wounded who were being treated at a more remote local hospital. This particular hospital was very primitive, with bare bulbs and broken windows in each room. Our medical team went over each patient carefully and found they had received good care. Even after 0200, these Sailors were glad to be attended by fellow Americans. I talked with them and each welcomed my offer to pray with them. I saw that they were genuinely comforted to receive pastoral care in such a hostile and foreign environment. When I returned to our headquarters, I rejoiced to see my Deputy Force Chaplain (and good friend), LCDR Mike Mikstay, a Roman Catholic priest, had arrived.

Although we’d had very little sleep, we were wide awake when we finally arrived at the brow to the COLE. Sleeping Sailors were strewn about the flight-deck of the ship, wrapped in gray blankets on the rough non-skid. Most were very dirty. The whole ship smelled of the explosive residue that covered everything. We found the Captain, Executive Officer, and Command Master Chief to let them know we were aboard. They were very glad to see us and pointed out a couple of Sailors they felt needed particular help. What followed was a week of individual and small group counseling and pastoral care that I will never forget. My children are the same ages as most of these crew-members. Their pain was very real to me.

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## *USS COLE: A Deckplate Chaplain's Perspective*

By LT Cartus Thornton, CHC, USNR



On the eve of the United States Navy's 225<sup>th</sup> birthday, October 12, 2000, terrorists attacked the USS COLE, an ARLEIGH BURKE destroyer on a brief refueling stop in Aden, Yemen. Their small boat somehow managed to get close enough to the destroyer to set off their explosive destruction. Seventeen Sailors were killed and forty-two were wounded by the deadly attack.

I had left the USS COLE in the Mediterranean almost a week earlier in order to participate in a change of command ceremony for COMDESRON 22. After hearing of the bombing, I immediately wanted to go to the stricken ship. Due to logistics and area clearance requirements, it would be five days before I would actually arrive there.

When I arrived at the Aden airport, the embassy informed me that they were expecting some of the bodies that had been recovered from the wreckage to be brought to the airport for transport home. I later found out that the C-130 I had flown in on from Bahrain also carried the caskets that were to go to be used to carry the remains. I watched as they unloaded the caskets, my heart heavy with grief. Later the FIFTH Fleet chaplain, Chaplain Ridgeway, would seek me out and ask me to participate in the ceremony that would honor the dead as they started their journey home. As we escorted the flag draped caskets on board the C-130, I silently prayed over each of the remains and could only imagine how their shipmates must be feeling at this terrible loss.

That night Chaplain Ridgeway gave me a brief summary of their (his and Chaplain Mike Mikstay's) ministry to that point. I knew that it was going to be rough, but I had no idea just how difficult things were going to be. I will never forget the faces that met me when I boarded the ship. Expressions of pain and grief were evident as I climbed up the brow. My heart went out to them and I could already feel the intense pain that they were experiencing. It didn't take much effort to empathize with them because I, too, had lost friends and shipmates. I saw their weariness and their heaviness of heart, but most evident of all was their steadfast determination.

I was assaulted by the terrible smells that lingered in the air as I was escorted over to the commanding officer, CDR Kirk Lippold. I could tell that he had been pushing himself hard and he appeared tired. And yet, I sensed his strength through his brief words and felt confidence in his handling of the ongoing crisis. He thought I would be best acclimated to the situation as it now stood by talking to the CIRT (Crisis Intervention Response Team) OIC, LCDR John Kennedy, whose team had arrived a couple of days earlier and had

already been working with the crew. I was introduced to Dr. Kennedy, and we found a place to talk. He told me what he thought the status of the crew was at the time. He said that his team was making progress.

I knew that I needed to get out among the crew to get a personal feel for the situation and to begin effective ministry. I began to move among the crew and listen to the Sailors as they expressed everything from anger and frustration to disbelief. What was expressed time and again was the knowledge that many of their shipmates were still entombed within the steel wreckage of the ship. This was perhaps the overriding issue that haunted them most. As bodies were recovered, the crewmembers would form a double line along the starboard side of the ship. Then the Captain and I would lead the pallbearers with the flag draped body bag(s) to the brow. The XO would call everyone to attention and order "hand salute." Tears were openly shed, sobbing was heard as Sailors were overcome by their grief. Shipmate comforted shipmate as they shared in their sorrow. The Marines in fitting tribute placed one of their own in the bow of the boat that carried the dead to the shore, with a rifle pointed forward, on guard. This sent a message of honor, dignity and respect to the crew. Finally the day came for the last body to be recovered. The ceremony went as before, but this time the tears were from relief and a sense of joy that all of their shipmates were going home. That burden was lifted.

I knew that it was now time to have a memorial service for the officers and crew, to find a closure of sorts, so that we could get beyond the tragedy that had struck and somehow go forward. The next day we gathered on the fantail along with FBI agents, naval shipyard workers, Navy divers, and Marines. I opened the service with a prayer and then the Commanding Officer stood and gave a profound description of what had happened, what we had lost, what we had gained and where we were. But most importantly, he talked about where we were going. Three COLE Sailors shared a brief eulogy that gave a glimpse of their heartfelt experiences and the feelings they were dealing with concerning the loss of their shipmates. I then delivered a message I believed would offer hope, encouragement, and a fitting memorial to the fallen Sailors. At the close of the service, the American flag that had flown since the attack was lowered and then passed and saluted seventeen times as I read the names of the shipmates who had been killed. The flag was then handed to the CMC who presented it to the CO. Taps was played, and we wept. After the service ended, I learned that somehow in the midst of the service I had not called out one of the names.

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## *Gulf Air Crash - Flight 072*

by LT Eric Verhulst, CHC, USN and the  
USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (CVN 73)  
Religious Ministry Team



I was in my rack at 2000 on 23 Aug 2000 (the last day of our Bahrain port visit) watching the credits and listening to the closing music of a video when I heard “Man Helo Flight Quarters! Helo crews and SAR (Search and Rescue) swimmers report to HS-15 Ready Room! Crisis Action Team report to Combat!” My first thought was that something had gone wrong with one of the water taxis. This fear was not alleviated by the next call that went out: “All medical personnel report to Main Medical!” I got dressed and went up to the office where I met the other ship’s chaplains, CDR Steve Gragg and LCDR Mike Klepacki. Chaplain Gragg informed us that Gulf Air flight 072 had crashed several miles to the north of GW’s anchorage on approach to Bahrain International Airport. A triage center was being set up at the airport and he and Chaplain Klepacki were being sent ashore with the medical personnel. Before leaving Chaplain Gragg passed to me, “Eric, you and Dan (LT Dan Whitaker, the CAG 17 chaplain) stay on board and do what you know and are trained to do. You are in charge.” By that time, the first HH-60s of HS-15 had already launched. As I headed for Combat to find out what I could, I passed Dan’s stateroom and found him there. I told him we had a real one and asked him to stand by.

Returning from Combat, I contacted Dan and let him know as much as I knew. It was arranged that returning helo crews, particularly SAR swimmers, would enter the ship via the Flight Deck Battle Dressing Station (BDS), so I passed that information to Dan and asked that he shuttle between the HS-15 ready room and the BDS to cover the helos. Not long after that the first of the helos returned and the SAR swimmer entered the BDS to be greeted by a corpsman and his chaplain. It was just what was needed then.

We heard that Chaplains Gragg and Klepacki were working alongside the assembled support teams from NSA Bahrain, FIFTH Fleet, GW and host country personnel at the airport. What was set up as a triage area ended up as a temporary morgue. Chaplain Gragg learned of our support on the ship from one of our helos that landed at the airport to

bring a load of body bags. When he queried the air crewman on how things were going on board, the crewman responded, “Every time we land on GW our chaplain (Dan Whitaker) comes out to pray with us and see how we are doing. Sure glad to see him.”

Meanwhile, I went down to the hangar bay to visit briefly with the crews launching the boats. From there I went on to Medical to discuss with the ship’s psychologist, Dr. Mark Lessard, measures we would take to deal with Critical Incident Stress. Then it became a long night of watching and praying. We set up our station near the stern dock to meet the returning ship’s boats by 2330, but the first of them didn’t come back until 0200. Two more boats got back around 0400. (But don’t quote me on the time; I wasn’t checking my watch that closely.) As I met the returning boat crews and listened to the youngsters tell their tales, it became very clear to us that we’d need some gatherings to help sort this all out—but

not this morning. Chaplains Gragg and Klepacki returned before sunrise. None of the GW ministry team slept that first night, we were a tired bunch. The last of those boats didn’t return until 1100 the next day, having been out for more than 12 hours.

We began our first in a series of six Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISDs) the evening of the day following the crash. Since the helo crews were first on the scene, we worked with

them first. It seemed a coincidence that our department had gone through a set of CISD drills and training just a couple of weeks before. We had been asked by our chain of command to rehearse our skills in case they were needed in the Arabian Gulf. Not only did the Command Religious Ministry Department (CRMD) do that but also, with the help of Dr. Lessard, we trained an additional team of four. Now, just two weeks later – both our CISD teams swung into action.

During the Critical Incident Stress Debriefs, matters of family continually cropped up:

“I pulled in an arm, a left arm, and on the finger was a plain, gold band—a wedding ring. I looked at my own wedding ring, and I’ll never forget that.” “What I can’t get



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## Ministry to Muslims During Times of Death

by LT Youssef H. Aboul-Enein, MSC, USN



As a Navy Islamic Lay-Leader, there is always the possibility that we must contend with a tragedy involving the death of a shipmate. For me, that time came when I was called upon to assist in the performance of Islamic burial rights for a Sailor at Naval Training Center Great Lakes. Whatever one's faith, the common denominators are the comforting of family and friends and paying final respects to the dead shipmate. The purpose of this article is to introduce the uninitiated to Islamic methods of dealing with death and dying.

### Dealing with Those About to Die

In Islam, simplicity is the rule, and on the battlefield, if one comes across a wounded Muslim about to die, simply hold his hand, caress him and recite the *Tashahud* (Declaration) with him saying, "*La-illaha-illa-Allah*" ("There is no God but Allah"). If it is medically or physically feasible, move him with his face toward the *Qiblah* (The *Kaaba* located in *Makkah* (Mecca)). If he is in a cot or bed, move the bed toward *Makkah* with his head facing the *Qiblah*. It is usually at this time that a fellow Muslim would assist in reminding him to make his peace with God and to make a will if he has not done so already.

Upon his last breath and confirmation of death, close the eyes, the lower jaw is to be closed and bound to the head, the joints of the deceased are gently flexed, the clothes removed and private parts covered with a cloth. The deceased is to be placed on a platform and washed while facing the *Qiblah*. Like Judaism, the washing and burial needs to occur as soon as feasible.

### Washing the Deceased Muslim

The order of those allowed to wash the deceased is as follows:

- (1) One specifically named by the deceased.
- (2) Father (if male) or mother (if female) of the deceased.
- (3) Grandfather (if male) or grandmother (if female) of the deceased.
- (4) Close male relatives (if male) or female relatives (if female).
- (5) Fellow muslims male or female depending of the sex of the deceased.

Muslim spouses may wash their partner if they so wish.

The recommended ways of washing the deceased are all proscribed in the *Quran* (Muslim Holy Book) and *Hadith*, *Sayings of Prophet Muhammed* (May Peace Be Upon Him). It will not be covered in detail here, but involves cleansing the body, preparing it for burial and invoking the name of God. Shrouding the body in three white clean sheets then occurs.

### Islamic Internment of the Dead

There is considerable debate among Muslims regarding the use of a coffin; in Arabia no coffins are used and the dead are buried swathed in sheets. The main issue is to encourage the natural decomposition of the remains as intended by God. However, in many non-Islamic nations there are strict laws stipulating the use of a casket and, should this be mandatory, usually the most inexpensive casket is in order. Cremation is forbidden in Islam.

### Prayers over the Dead

This occurs during the time of the five daily prayers that is performed as a group. On the day the body is to be interred, the body is brought out before the Imam (one who leads the prayers of the group) upon the conclusion of the actual regularly scheduled prayer. The prayer over the dead is then performed and consists of four *Takbeers* (Statements of *Allah-u-Akbar* translated "God is Great" that is done during prayers).

**After the first *takbeer*:** The prayer starts with the *Al-Faithah*, seeking refuge in God.

**After the second *takbeer*:** Supplications are made in memory of Prophets Muhammed and Abraham (Peace Be Upon Them) and their families and communities founded by both prophets.

**After the third *takbeer*:** Prayers and forgiveness of the deceased and all members of the community both alive and deceased.

**After the fourth *takbeer*:** Quiet time and reflection is in order and nothing is said.

The prayer ends with one salutation to the right and the deceased is then taken for burial.

### At the Gravesite

The body is placed on its right side facing the *Qiblah* and those actually involved in placing the body in the grave should invoke the memory of God. The body is then buried.

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## *CAPT Eileen O. Norrington, CHC, USN Retires First Woman Chaplain to Complete Full Navy Career*

March 26<sup>th</sup> was a historic occasion for the Navy Chaplain Corps as Chaplain Eileen Norrington became the first woman in the history of the United States Navy to complete a 20-year career as a Navy chaplain.

Guest speaker for her retirement ceremony was Chief of Chaplains, RADM Barry C. Black. In his remarks, Chaplain Black commented that “when then-Chaplain O’Hickey entered the Navy, no woman could truly anticipate the burdens, challenges and hurdles of a career in the Navy Chaplain Corps. The fact that we are here today is a testimony that from the start, Eileen... maintain(ed) her faith, pursuing her goals and, by the grace of God, attaining her destiny... The spectacular success of women in the Navy Chaplain Corps was never inevitable, nor did it just happen. Instead, it was a reality created by the likes of Eileen Norrington who will stand for the rest of Chaplain Corps history as the woman, first among equals, who brought the dream to life for women chaplains.”

Chaplain Norrington was ordained in the Central Congregational Church, Newtonville, Massachusetts. She was commissioned as a Navy chaplain in July 1978. She then



*Then, LT Hickey speaks with a visitor in her office.*

commenced a succession of diverse and challenging tours at training commands, CREDOs, medical centers, and isolated places like Diego Garcia. Following a tour as Headquarters Battalion Chaplain at Camp Pendleton, she attended the Advanced Chaplain Course at The Naval Chaplains School. After the Advanced Course she served as the Command Chaplain at Naval Submarine School in Groton, Connecticut. She then served aboard USS EMORY S. LAND (AS 39). From the LAND, she went to the Chief of Chaplains staff, followed by two claimancies in a row: Naval Security Group and Naval Reserve Force. In 1996, she became the first woman promoted to the grade of Captain in the U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps. She leaves active duty to serve on the national staff of the United Church of Christ.



*Signing oath of office as the first woman to be promoted to the rank of Captain in the Chaplain Corps.*



## *Field Medical Service School/ Chaplain and RP Expeditionary Skills Training (FMSS/CREST) From a “Survivor”*

by RPCS (FMF/SW) Cindy A. Blankenship, USN



When I was asked to address the issue of my experience at FMSS/CREST, all I could think of was: “How could anyone put such an experience on paper accurately?” In this short article, I will try to compress over five weeks of exhaustive physical and mental experiences.

FMSS/CREST is the only course of instruction to provide RMT (Religious Ministry Team) training to chaplains and RPs being assigned to FMF units, Seabees and Fleet Hospitals. In FMSS, Hospital Corpsman, Dental Technicians and Religious Program Specialists train together to become “field ready, lean, mean, fighting machines.” When I received my orders I called RPCM(FMF/SW/AW) Robin Holdren, the Assistant Director and Senior RP at CREST and found that the school has a website ( [www.lejeune.usmc.mil/fmss](http://www.lejeune.usmc.mil/fmss) ).

Upon arrival, all personnel were assigned to one of four platoons. Assigned to the blue side for over 20 years, I didn’t even know what a platoon was! HMs, DTs and RPs train together, except for the 14 days the RMTs are assigned to the CREST portion of the school. One of the first things my enlisted military advisors did was pull me aside to talk to me about how they expected me to interact with the other students. Looking around I quickly realized that I was senior to my instructors in FMSS. Thankfully, I did arrive with the understanding and knowledge that I was a student; no matter what my rank, I would earn my NEC just like everyone else. I was successful in achieving the qualifications factors that all other students were required to attain.

The structure of academics and physical conditioning at FMSS/CREST is a rigorous one. Each student is expected to complete classroom time with testing each week along with field time, plus a four, six, seven and eight mile hike known to seasoned green RPs as a “hump.” “What’s a hump?” I asked. I soon found out! As one of the GySgt instructors replied “Just a walk in the park on a nice day! OOOrraah!”

During FMSS/CREST, RPs are trained on a myriad of topics, including:

- Helo Ride
- HMMV
- Night Navigation
- Religious Ministry Team (14 days with the chaplain)
- Weapons Familiarization Fire

- Patrolling
- Organizational Structure of the Marine Corps
- 2 Navy/1 Marine Physical Fitness Test
- MOOTW (Military Operations Other Than War)
- Marine Corps Uniforms

I don’t mind telling people that one of my biggest fears was competing with Sailors the same age as my children! Surprisingly enough, what got me through FMSS/CREST was those very Sailors that I had initially feared. They were a wonderful group, so young and full of life, they truly made it



Photo by JOI Preston Keres, ALL HANDS

easier for me. They made me laugh, they made me cry, they made me want to go on, to finish what I had started. What I learned the most in FMSS/CREST was to exceed my self-imposed limitations, both mentally and physically. I was taken beyond what I thought I could never achieve. In order to reach those heights, I had to deal with anxiety and despair. The anxiety of hoping and praying that I would get through every day, and the despair of thinking I would **not** get through the day. However, I found that keeping a good attitude and being willing to say, “I can do this!” was key.

What did I get out of this, you ask? Pride and the satisfaction that I could not only finish the school on my own two feet, but know that those young Sailors had a new respect for an *old codger* (one old enough to be their mother!) The fact that I was able to hang in there with these young Sailors surprised not only me, but them as well. By

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## Within the Chaplain Corps Family



*Chaplain Jim Nickols prays at the christening ceremony for the aircraft carrier Ronald W. Reagan.*



### Meritorious Service Medal

*CAPT Thomas E. Dansak, CHC, USN*  
Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico

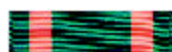
*CAPT Al Hill, CHC, USN*  
NAVJEPSTA Yorktown, VA



### Navy/Marine Corps Commendation Medal

*LCDR Michael E. Klarer, CHC, USN*  
NAVMEDCEN San Diego, CA

*RP3(SW/AW) Kristy L. Grayson, USN*  
USS NIMITZ (CVN 68)



### Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medal

*LT William N. Hamilton, CHC, USNR*  
NAVSTA San Diego, CA

*RP1 (SW/FMF) Alan Dagg, USN*  
SUBASE New London, CT

*RP2 Anton J. Beechler, USN*  
NAVSTA San Diego, CA

*RP2 Douglas J. Coats, USN*  
SUBASE San Diego, CA

*RP2 John Bonsanti, USN*  
CREDO San Diego, CA

*RP2 Elizabeth R. Wright, USN*  
NMCB-5 Port Hueneme, CA



### Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist

*RP1(SW/FMF) Fermin T. Ancho, USN*  
USS LAKE ERIE (CG 70)

*RP2(SW) Alicia Johnson, USN*  
USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER (CVN 69)

*RP3(SW) Heather A. Osterberg, USN*  
USS BRIDGE (AOE 10)

### Command Advancement Program

*RP2(SW/FMF) Timothy D. Fitzpatrick, USN*  
2ND MARDIV FMFLANT

*RP3(FMF) Bradford D. Heinrich, USN*  
2ND MARDIV FMFLANT

### Sailor of the Quarter

*RP3(SW) Heather A. Osterberg, USN*  
USS BRIDGE (AOE 10)

*RP3 Jessica Costasrogers, USN*  
Regional Support Group Mayport, FL

### Air Force Officer Candidate Program

*RP1(FMF) Hiro Ababon*  
2ND MARDIV FMFLANT



## IN MEMORIAM

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*Initial Response Ministry... (continued from page 6)*

In spite of the obvious look of shock on many faces, we were warmly welcomed by the crew. There was a good deal of denial, numb stares, and some loud anger. Shipmates were comforting and encouraging each other. The usual Sailor joking was conspicuously absent. Tears came from many as we talked with them. They spoke of how they narrowly missed being on the, now-destroyed, mess decks at the time of the explosion. They were self-critical about their performance in the post-blast chaos. I believe many actually expected to perform at a superhuman level like they see in the movies. The fog of battle and the reality of their own fears, made many doubt their own worth. I reminded them of some of the human failures of the great Biblical heroes like the prophet Elijah and the apostle Peter who were, at times, overcome by fear and yet were still greatly used by God.

As time passed and shock wore off, the hard task of maintaining the ship with a huge hole in its side in these hostile waters dawned on everyone. Power was sporadic. The forward part of the ship was dark and hot. The crew's eating area had been destroyed by the blast, trapping a number of sailors in a crushing tangle of jagged metal. There was no hope of survival for them. I listened to countless stories of "Where I Was When the Bomb Exploded." Everyone onboard had lost friends. With this being a mixed gender crew, some had lost people they were dating and were overwhelmed to the point of being unresponsive or non-functional. The heat of the Yemen sun raised a smell onboard that was a constant reminder of rotting food and un-recovered bodies. We had no shortage of people who still wanted to talk. The real emotions were just beginning to come out.

More help arrived each day. Engineers, shipyard workers, Marines, FBI, and crew members from several other Navy ships swarmed over the Cole with passionate concern. The crew had not only kept the ship afloat, but had some electricity and air conditioning going in the after-part of the ship. I had recommended that the Crisis Intervention Response Team (CIRT) be alerted immediately. A nine-person team led by psychologist LCDR John Kennedy arrived from Sigonella, Italy, and began working with the crew on day five after the blast. We met frequently to coordinate our efforts and share non-confidential information.

LCDR Mikstay and I were very glad to have other chaplains arriving. During interviews with the crew, I heard numerous positive comments about their squadron chaplain, LT Cartus Thornton. A few days into the crisis we had become Joint Task Force "Determined Response." I recommended to the JTF Commander that Chaplain Thornton be brought in from the Mediterranean. He had left COLE to ride another ship just a few days before the blast. The USS CAMDEN (AOE 2) had also arrived off the coast of Yemen and COLE crew-members were going aboard for R&R. When they returned, they raved about the wonderful treatment they received from the CAMDEN crew and their chaplain LT Andy



*(RP2 Leeper, Chaplain Ridgeway, and Chaplain Mikstay)*

Carlson. The USS TARAWA arrived with chaplains LCDR Phil Creider and LT Alan Ford. The threat to those of us living on the ground in Yemen was considered too severe, so we moved aboard ships. LCDR Mikstay moved aboard the USS COOK, and I appreciated the kind hospitality of the TARAWA.

Continuing security and remains removal became the focus of effort. In addition to providing pastoral care to the crew, we also counseled divers, shipyard workers, and investigators, as they laboriously coerced the twisted steel into giving up the dead. These were not timid people, but they too sought us out for a chat now and again as they progressed. I escorted flag-draped body bags as they were ceremonially carried down the side of the ship by their shipmates. Mike rode with the bodies in the rubber Zodiac to shore. Later, one of us walked ahead of each coffin as it was loaded by honor guards into waiting aircraft. Finally, our last fallen shipmates were on their way home. You could feel the relief. After eight days, five other chaplains were now on scene. Chaplain Mikstay and I returned to Bahrain, expanded our focus back to the whole AOR and, helped deal with Threat Condition Delta.

The COLE situation had some distinctives that made it particularly challenging for ministry. This was a hostile terrorist attack, not a training accident. The critically injured ship and crew remained in "enemy territory" where the ongoing threat felt very real. Additional terrorist attacks were a source of constant concern. The Sailors' minds were haunted by worries of small boat or swimmer attack, sniper fire from the cliffs above the harbor, and even the possibility of poisoning through the locally purchased food. The ongoing ship recovery situation was a constant reminder that the battle was not over. We felt it keenly ourselves as we visited watch-standers in spaces that had been flooded and then de-watered. We did counseling next to bulkheads with

*(continued on page 20)*



students after field scenarios, we review the contributions of the UMT during triage in caring for the “virtual” casualties. This helps increase the medical team’s awareness of the spiritual needs of casualties. We help the students reflect on their own emotional and spiritual needs during the exercise and explore options for peer resources in the absence of a chaplain. I discuss the value of a sense of God’s presence in restoring hope and sanity amid what the faculty calls “The Fog of War.” Colonel Clifford Cloonan, MC, U.S. Army, Vice Chair of the Department of Military and Emergency Medicine, says, “Just because we cannot save those whom we expect to die doesn’t mean they don’t have real emotional and spiritual needs. In a mass casualty crisis some of the medical professionals need the chaplain’s support.”

“...life transforming service...” When health or life is threatened to the point that a physician is required, it can often lead to a life transforming experience. Such events are



fertile ground for spiritual receptivity and growth. The Association of American Medical Colleges featured spirituality in its January 2000 issue of *Innovations in Medical Education*. The author, Christina M. Puchalski, M.D., affirms, “Physicians help their patients cope with all types of suffering: physical, emotional and spiritual. Spiritual suffering has to do with the despair many patients feel in the midst

of chronic illness or stressful life events. Spirituality can be defined as an individual’s search for meaning and purpose in life especially in the midst of this suffering. By listening to the patient’s hopes and fears, doctors can help them find meaning in their lives. It can be expressed in religions, belief in God or Higher Power, nature, music, and other spiritual beliefs.”

In boot camp, service academies or OCS, servicemembers learn from the beginning of their military experience that chaplains are there for them as part of the team to serve them and along side them. At USU, we have the responsibility and



privilege at this strategic time to bring the good news and hope of God to the future leaders of military medicine as they begin both their professional and military careers. They not only learn the value of God’s servants for themselves and families, they also incorporate that awareness into their medical practice in order to better serve their patients.

“...throughout and beyond the Sea Services.” In July 1999, the Navy Surgeon General approved funding for billets for a Navy chaplain and an RP at the DOD joint command of USU. The Commanding Officer, Colonel Charles S. Serio, MS, U.S. Army, states, “The arrival of Chaplain Evans and RP2 Olitoquit as the first permanently assigned ministry team at USU has filled a void in pastoral care that has existed since the University’s inception. This team educates and enhances our entry level students with the knowledge and value of a chaplain and RP in military medicine.” Currently USU physicians on active duty represent over 20 percent of the physicians in the Armed Forces, with that number increasing each year. Just imagine how many people these physicians



will serve in all the Sea Services and beyond.

## Conclusions

In his book, *The Saline Solution*, Walter Larimore, M.D. quotes Paul Brand, M.D. as saying, “In the medical profession, we do have a matchless, wonderful opportunity to meet



people at times of their real need, when they are ready to open up their hearts and expose their fears and worries and concerns.” Dr. Larimore continues, “More than any other professional, the doctor has personal access into people’s lives.” This is a sacred honor and privilege.

As chaplains, you and I can share that privilege. Our unique role is crucial to our people. Others can serve as litter bearers, first aid assistants or runners. Chaplains are the only persons strategically placed to assist them in meeting their spiritual needs.

The Navy Chaplain Corps Vision Statement comes alive at USU. One needs only to observe the synergistic learning dynamic between the future leaders of military medicine and the UMT uniting to provide quality, wholistic care in meeting the needs of God’s people in the uniformed services at their most vulnerable moments.



Chaplain J. Steven Evans is Command Chaplain at USU, Bethesda, MD.

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## *Ministry to Muslims... (continued from page 9)*

Neighbors typically prepare food for the relatives of the deceased and pay condolences at their home, sharing in their grief. It is, however, frowned upon to tear one’s clothing, strike one’s cheeks, or to otherwise make a spectacle of grief in orthodox Islamic traditions.

## Final Thoughts

Islam like many of the great monotheistic religions, has many sects, and usually molds culture with religion. This article quickly highlights the major aspects of an Islamic funeral for the uninitiated. There have been detailed studies and books on this subject. As more Muslims enter our Armed Forces and low intensity conflicts around the globe place us in touch with different cultures, it is vital in today’s Navy to be aware of different faith groups and their methods of worship. Major sources for this article include *Tafseer-al-Fiqh (Fiqh Made Easy)* by Dr. Saalih ibn Ghanim al-Sadlaan of the Muhammed ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. A translation by Jamaal al-Din Zarabozo is

available via [www.al-basheer.com](http://www.al-basheer.com). Another source for this article is *Bulugh al-Maram min adilah al-ahkam (Attainment of the Objective According to the Evidence of Ordinance)* by Al-Hafiz ibn Hajar al-Asqalani. This excellent book used by Islamic scholars breaks down the Prophet Muhammed’s sayings into specific areas like marriage, funerals, prayer, alms giving, etc.



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*Creating New Paradigms... (continued from page 4)*

matters so personal; just follow the path which works best for you. If we take time to do this, the difference in our ministry will be profound. People will be quick to notice that their chaplain's serenity comes from a deep well of faith, and that, indeed, his fears have been brought under control by countless prayers. Such a chaplain can, as the Cardinal said, do much good in God's name for God's people.

**Sudden Flight**

Much of the above insight comes from reflection on events I experienced in the wake of the Mount Pinatubo eruption in the Philippines during Operations Fiery Vigil and Safe Haven in 1991. You cannot imagine the suddenness and intensity with which our lives, homes and community were turned upside down. These were operations which are not unlike many other disaster responses, but they are worth consideration because the ministry which Chaplains and RPs rendered at that catastrophic time combined almost all elements that one is likely to encounter in future operations:



a sudden calamity creating mass casualties and thousands of refugees, a fractured supply line and infrastructure, joint service involvement, media scrutiny, civilian relief agency involvement (NGO), and warriors becoming humanitarians. All this played out on the other side of the globe in the highly-charged political atmosphere of a third-world country.

At the commencement of Operations Fiery Vigil and Safe Haven our Religious Ministry Team was put in charge of setting up all Naval Station Subic Bay Chapel and religious education facilities as evacuation shelters for about 400 people. This was a true team effort and the RPs did a stand-up job scavenging MREs, water, battle lanterns, batteries, diapers and baby formula. There were only five days' notice between the time 18,000 people from Clark Air Base were evacuated to Subic Bay and the onset of eruption. With the tidal wave of people flooding into Subic Bay on such short notice, providing shelter, food and basic sanitation services

became a logistics nightmare. Chapels and school gyms were all speedily converted into makeshift dormitories as people settled in and adjusted. In the back of everyone's mind were many questions: Will Pinatubo erupt? Will I be able to return to my home? Will we be evacuated? Will active-duty personnel remain behind?

The implications for ministry to people so suddenly dislocated were enormous. Religious services were held with maximum attendance. As the week drew on and the novelty of the evacuation faded, signs of stress became more evident. The mood turned somber and restless. Some would withdraw to a corner of the Chapel and begin to cry for no apparent reason. The steady presence and concern of chaplains were an invaluable source of hope and strength for so many. The little chitchats we had were, in reality, our way of assuring the people that all would turn out OK. Yet, the real crisis was still to come.

**Terror in the Night**

After five days of waiting, the firestorm began. First, columns of thick, heavy smoke arched overhead, blotting out the bright Philippine sky. A surreal atmosphere enveloped us. For the next 36 hours there was total darkness, a palpable darkness, as volcanic rock and ash pelted the landscape. Hunkered down at the Chapel, people prayed and children clutched to their mothers. I wondered if the walls, built way before anyone heard of an airplane, could hold up. When the volcanic storm finally ceased, we ventured outdoors and got our first glimpse of what Pinatubo had done to us. The tropical landscape, once verdant and lush, was now more like a war zone. Majestic palm trees were destroyed and strewn about, cars and trucks scattered this way and that, crushed buildings lay in every direction, and roads were rendered useless. Off base there were hundreds of dead; tens of thousands were homeless. Entire villages were wiped away in relentless deluges of *lahar*—liquefied ash which poured down from the mountains of Central Luzon. These images, shocking to see, will remain with me forever.

Remarkably, our old Chapel, which in other days had survived typhoons, earthquakes and abuse by Imperial Japanese occupation forces, had stood up to the roar of Mount Pinatubo. The Navy launched a massive evacuation of all non-essential personnel from the Philippines. Every available ship in the Western Pacific was pressed into service to ferry families, Air Force personnel, and civilians first to safety and then back to American soil. During this operation, chaplains were at every site where people were gathered for processing: the shelters, first-aid stations, on the busses shuttling families to the piers, and helping them safely board the ships. Patients had to be brought aboard ships, too, some on stretchers with IVs. Next to the American pull-out from

Vietnam, this is said to have been the largest evacuation in U.S. history.

### **A Pivotal Role**

During these operations, it seemed that commanders were looking to their chaplains for guidance, both spiritual and practical. This was possible simply because chaplains were constantly with the people—military, families, civilians, Filipinos—reading their mood and interpreting what those feelings meant. This was especially so in the first few days after the calamity when uncertainty and fear gripped people's hearts and, in many cases, clouded their judgment.

In some operations, the chaplain may become the pivot upon which important human issues are balanced. Why? Because in today's "dot-com" world of instant communications and internet, there is, as the saying goes: "*A plentitude of information, but a paucity of understanding.*" The commander will get tons of information from all his staff officers, but precious few will be able to give him a true understanding of what this information really means. Many staff officers are experts in their particular field, but they sometimes fail to integrate all available data and penetrate, *with human eyes*, to see what lies hidden under the mountains of information. The Biblical analogy is evident in the story of Joseph in Egypt. Many seers in Pharaoh's court were able to explain their master's dream. Joseph, on the other hand, articulated to Pharaoh not only the meaning of the confused images of his dreams, he made sensible policy recommendations based on that data (build granaries and store food during years of plenty, etc.). This is a model we can use in our relationship to commanders. In other words, good ministry and good staff work go hand-in-hand.

An example: During Operation Safe Haven, the U.S. bases sent out large amounts of food, potable water and building materials to distribution centers in Central Luzon. The personnel in charge were satisfied that the trucks were rolling, supplies delivered and, on paper, all looked good. But because we thought it important to have chaplains and RPs accompany the delivery trucks, we soon realized that some local scoundrels were hoarding and selling the U.S. food and materials. We reported this and appropriate actions were taken to ensure the people who needed the humanitarian supplies actually received it.

The chaplain and RP play a critical role and have a splendid opportunity to live out the paradigm articulated by the Rebbe and the Cardinal—to do a lot of good for a lot of people. It just takes a little out-of-the-box thinking and a lot of teamwork.

### **Ministry In and Out of the Box**

Now, as important as an out-of-the-box approach may be, in-the-box ministries must never be relegated to second place. There is simply no substitute for ministry of presence and

worship, which are absolutely paramount in crisis situations. The chaplain will represent normality and stability—the anchor to which people can attach their hopes until life gets back to normal. To paraphrase the prophetic voice in *Field of Dreams*: "*If you build it they will come.*" If the chaplain builds warm relationships through regular visitation; if he is visible wherever the people work, stand guard, do PT, eat chow, they will keep coming and refer to him in conversations with their peers and in letters home as "*my chaplain.*" Remember, bedside manner counts, and a smile on the chaplain's face can be the most powerful ministry of all.

### **Healing the Heartbroken**

There is a big difference between spiritual survival and spiritual renewal. The chaplain who shoots for the latter stands a greater chance of achieving some success in his ministry. Even in a

crisis mode such renewal is not only possible, it is necessary. At one point during the evacuation when it became obvious that Pinatubo would soon blow, our Air Force evacuees realized that they would never see their homes and belongings again. The sobbing which broke out in our Chapel was truly heart rending. One person would begin to cry, then another and another. Then I remembered what Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel once said: "*When a person of little faith loses a loved one, he cries. When a person of stronger faith loses a loved one, he cries but accepts the loss as God's will. When a person of extraordinary faith loses a loved one, he turns his sorrow into song.*" With that in mind I called people's attention and began to sing simple little tunes which everyone knows and asked them to join me (sing along with Mitch?!). The Chapel filled with song and one could see "smiles through the tears." This was one profound moment of ministry.



In these operations there are always the children— many children it seems. Their innocence is a stark contrast to the inhumanity of events swirling around their little heads. Again you will have to draw upon the wells of faith that we spoke about earlier in order to handle images you wish you had never seen. Because RMT personnel bear a unique burden, it is critical that chaplains minister to one another and to the RPs. One particular day, after a two hour ride in a Humvee under a merciless sun, we arrived at a remote, impoverished region in Bataan to deliver humanitarian supplies. The Marines were excited about doing a kind deed, and the children were so happy to receive the food and little toys we were able to provide. A young girl cried as we handed her a bag of fresh fruits and goodies. I asked the teacher why she was crying, and quite honestly, was not prepared for the response: “These children are very poor,” she explained. “All their parents can feed them is rice and some dried fish. This girl has never tasted an orange.” Can such a ministry not transform one’s soul?

### Aftercare

Long after the last welcome home banner is removed from the front-gate, ministry must continue. The chaplain can bring an important ministry to his people during the first few months after homecoming through ritual, presence, practical assistance and referral to other helping agencies. The most essential point about aftercare ministry is that the chaplain’s relationship with his people not be allowed to fizzle out just because they are now back in garrison. There are unique challenges at this time. Most Sailors and Marines will come home to grateful families and have a relatively smooth transition. Others will find that the reality of homecoming falls far short of the image that sustained them for so long. Still others may recall with regret and shame the things they did, or contemplated doing, during the separation. The chaplain can ensure that any moral accounting not preclude the gently smiling quality of faith that can heal wounds and renew worn spirits.

This whole process can best be summed up in the three “reaches” of ministry:

**1. Outreach.** Establish pastoral relationships with your people by being with them and sharing their hardships. Extend your concern over a wide area through media,

fellowship events, creative worship, Bible study and collaboration with other helping agencies.

**2. Inreach.** This is a more personal and individualized process of touching people’s lives by allowing them to share with you their pain, fears, guilt, dreams and hopes. (Victor Frankel is helpful here: “*We may not know the meaning behind our suffering, but we can suffer with meaning.*”) The chaplain mediates his people’s pain by helping them connect with God’s love and healing.

**3. Upreach.** Lift people up as sacred beings, as children of God. Nurture that encounter with the Divine through worship, sacrament, study and a community that really cares. Also, consider plugging people into local COMREL projects and emphasize that such good works are a valid, important way of serving God.

### Conclusion

For years we have discussed combat ministry because that is where we were

in the Cold War and Vietnam era. The possibility of combat ministry still exists and we must be ready for that test when and if it comes. But today, crisis ministry is a certainty. It is not as life-threatening as ministry in combat operations; its dangers are more subtle. It is a ministry that calls for chaplains to wear many different hats that may appear at times to be in conflict with one another. Crisis ministry will take you to places you never knew existed. There you will run into saints and scoundrels, hucksters and humanitarians, and everything in between. You may find yourself in a country where Uncle Sam is seen as the “Great Satan”; or in others where they believe he is their only hope. Expect primitive living conditions. Cell phone and internet service? Consider yourself fortunate if you can find a porta-potty that won’t make you sick. You will share the pain of our men and women and your heart will feel like breaking when you see them hurt. Other times you will share their small victories and joys.

This ministry will challenge you like no other. It will inspire you, scare you, tire you beyond exhaustion and drive you crazy. But it will make you a stronger person and a better servant of God. Don’t try to understand it—remember the paradigm of the Rebbe and the Cardinal, and just do it! Crisis Ministry will renew your faith and through it, you will contribute to what the ancient Rabbis called *Tikun Olam*, the sacred duty to repair a broken world. God Bless and stay great!





*Initial Response Ministry... (continued from page 14)*

temporary support structures holding back seawater that could have sunk the ship. In addition, the crew continued to live and work amid the twisted metal, blast residue, and ongoing smell of decay. I spent time with Sailors washing blood off of stretchers. Experiencing all of this ourselves caused us to shift our ministry and counseling focus away from the full grief process, to prayer and encouragement that helped them gather strength to carry on and be victorious over the situation.

Here are the highlights of what I learned during my time in Yemen with the USS COLE. I hope some of it may be of use to my fellow chaplains.

**1. Get to the scene of the crisis quickly and call for backup.** I recommend you work to get your commander's agreement on this issue before any crisis happens, or you may well be left behind. We called for the DESRON chaplain as our backup with the ARG chaplains in reserve.

**2. Keep the senior operational chaplain responsible for the AOR updated on your location.** As the FIFTH Fleet Chaplain, I had been tracking all chaplains I knew of in our AOR. Knowing there was no chaplain on the scene allowed me to negotiate a place on the very first flight. Had there been a chaplain aboard the COLE who failed to report his in-chop to the FIFTH Fleet AOR, I would have given my commander bad information. I am sometimes surprised to find unreported chaplains in the AOR. While I'm always glad to have them, knowing where they are makes our crisis planning and response much more accurate.

**3. Multiple chaplains and RPs working together is a ministry multiplier.** My Roman Catholic counterpart and I worked as a team in ministry to the crew and each other. This allowed us to be more than we would have been individually. RP2 Leeper made things happen for us back at NAVCENT headquarters. He also cared for seventeen COLE Sailors as they passed through Bahrain on their way home. The ministry of Chaplain Thornton, who was known and loved by the crew, was invaluable. The ministry of Chaplains Carlson, Creider, Ford, Mandato, and Peyton aboard ships offshore rounded out a team that I felt confident could handle anything.

**4. Don't throw all available chaplain resources into the center of the crisis.** I purposely didn't engage every chaplain directly aboard COLE. I wanted a ready reserve in case any of the other threats we were hearing about came to pass. Chaplain Mikstay and I were the pastoral "First-Aid." Many of the people we saw were in shock. I'm sure many will barely remember our presence or they may even associate us with the horror of the initial events. Chaplain Thornton arrived a few days later and provided a different level of care, as might a family physician arriving at the emergency room to meet up with one of his regular patients. The ship chaplains that ministered to visiting crew dealt with those emotions that

begin to surface when crewmembers visited a safer environment. Chaplains Frank Johnson and Joseph Koch watched over our home port of Bahrain while in tense Threat Condition Delta. Chaplain Doug Waite with the Carrier Battle Group kept an eye on the rest of the AOR while we were engaged aboard COLE.

**5. In a crisis, communications may be very limited.** With the COLE radio capability destroyed, and only a Yemen hotel room as a command center, it was a constant struggle to keep the world informed. Lines were jammed with requests for information. Each day after the JTF meeting, I dutifully provided my input for the situation report that came out by Naval message. Chaplains on the scene may find that due to the sensitive nature of crisis-related information, only the official situation report is allowed. *Chaplains desiring information on a crisis of this type should check the message traffic before attempting to contact the scene directly.*

**6. Educate your commanders about how our crisis ministry helps and strengthens, rather than weakens and hinders.** The COLE CO was initially reluctant to allow chaplains to come aboard and begin pastoral ministry with the crew. His feeling seemed to be that crew performance would be degraded if we addressed the grief process. This is a realistic concern when trying to keep a ship with a forty-foot hole in the side afloat in hostile waters. Our pastoral care must always be situation conscious, since we minister in a very real world.

**7. Chaplains must support commander's decisions.** We felt that the crew should be evacuated when the ship was stabilized and the remains of the dead were finally removed. The ship was extremely crowded after the first week with divers, investigators, shipyard and ship repair people, VIP visitors, and many others. Facilities for berthing, messing, and heads were marginal, since only the after portion of the ship had power. I wanted to get the crew away from the scenes of trauma thinking it would minimize PTSD. My input was put into the mix and the decision was made to keep the crew aboard until the COLE was loaded on another ship to be sent home. After the decision was made, I consciously worked to support it.

**8. Chaplains should work with, but not try to become, the Crisis Intervention Response Team (CIRT).** Having recently experienced CIRT operation on Bahrain dealing with a Gulf Air crash that killed 140, we were familiar with their approach. The team leader graciously invited Chaplain Mikstay and me to join his nine person CIRT team. We had already been onboard four days and saw continuing needs for pastoral care. Since the CIRT was large and we didn't want to be locked into their schedule, we declined the invitation to join and kept up our full-time pastoral counseling. We had a good relationship with the team and benefited from two-way sharing of non-confidential information.



## The Navy Chaplain

*Initial Response Ministry... (continued from page 20)*

**9. Don't overestimate your endurance.** Factors such as lack of sleep, irregular food, side-effects of malaria pills, and basic stress take a real toll. Adrenaline can only carry a person so far. I will always feel that I should have done more for the sailors on COLE, but there is more to do than a body can manage. We have to watch out for each other and force ourselves to disengage for recovery purposes. We would make the situation worse by working until we collapse.

**10. Trust in God's grace.** Crises force people to look beyond themselves. It is our daily walk with God that prepares us to endure and be a help to others. As chaplains, we have unique answers to the tough questions such situations generate. We need to bring these spiritual answers with humility and confidence. God will bless.

*Gulf Air Crash - Flight 072 (continued from page 8)*

over is all the shoes—all the little kids' shoes floating around. God! There must have been a lot of kids on that plane." "I reached down to pull up the body of a kid, but when I got him up, there was nothing below the waist. He looked just like my little brother. I can't get that picture out of my mind." "I was told that some of them were Iranians, but it didn't matter. At this point, they're just people with families just like us; just like me."

The above quotes summed up the overall spirit on board this ship during and after the recovery. It doesn't matter whether one was from Bahrain, Egypt, Russia, England or anywhere, and it is good for us to get to that point - the point where "...they're just people—people with families just like us; just like me."

**Epilogue.** If you don't have a CISD team on board, have one trained. GW deployed with a fully trained team of four personnel. Now we have two trained teams and are in the process of training a third. Employment and use of the CISD teams are now written into the ship's SORM. On May 9-10 of this year, the command is sending Chaplains Cieriello and Green, RPC Norman and RP1 Drake to certified training. There were no arguments when Chaplain Gragg requested funding; the need for this valuable skill is not in question.

*FMSS/CREST From a "Survivor" (continued from page 11)*



*Photo by JO1 Preston Keres, ALL HANDS*

the end of this course, I had an appreciation for the Fleet Marine Force RP and knew that I had **earned** my 2401 NEC.

Words of wisdom worth passing on:

- I want to stress the importance of the command's responsibility to medically screen prospective students prior to detachment. Students need to arrive at FMSS/CREST medically screened and in good physical conditioning in order to successfully complete this course of instruction.
- Take care of your feet. If your feet hurt, so do you! I had an infection and lost five of my toe nails. It took over four months before I could get a pedicure!
- Remember this is a course and it's short lived. Complete the requirements and be successful in this class. If that means studying every weekend to pass the tests, then do it.
- I prayed daily to get through the day without a broken bone or broken spirit.
- Before the hike I was filled with anxiety. One morning while still in the barracks and preparing for a hike, I was asked to join a prayer circle to ask God to be with us, to help us be strong and to get us through this. Thanks ladies, you are true shipmates!



*RPCS (FMF/SW) Blankenship is assigned as the Senior Enlisted Advisor for I MEF.*

See the March 2001 edition of  
**ALL HANDS** magazine  
for "Prayer and Protection"  
- an article on CREST.

The following link will take you to the article online:  
<http://www.mediacen.navy.mil/pubs/allhands/mar01/pg32.htm>

It was also noted that a new flag was not raised even though it was technically after sunset. So we re-gathered to raise a new flag, one to mark a new beginning and this allowed me to call out the name of the Sailor that I had failed to read. Seventeen flashlights shone brightly upon the flag as she was raised and that too gave strength and resolve to the USS COLE Sailors.

A few days later we obtained a copy of the memorial service that had taken place in Norfolk and viewed it on the flight deck. Everyone was in attendance and emotions were high. Watching for their reactions, I wondered if it had been a good idea to show the video. But then afterward, we watched the family gram tape that had arrived and I knew that it was. Hearts were lifted and there was actually laughter heard. It was a good medicine. I was glad that we had shown it and silently cheered at their responses.

Over the next couple of weeks, the crew would tell me of their concerns, their uncertainties, and their fears. Many would relate their experiences, where they were and what they were doing when the attack came and how for some reason their lives had been spared. They could no longer think of themselves as invincible. They wanted to know more about life. Many related to me that surely God must have a plan for their lives. They asked the hard questions, "Why?" I didn't have the answers they searched for, but I sought to

comfort them and try to give them strength and support. They questioned their own lives, how they had lived, their failures and successes, their hopes and dreams. It was a time of transition for each of them and many were in the process of making decisions or reconsidering decisions that would effect them for life. They carefully considered their relationships, what they meant and what the future might hold for them.

The day finally arrived when we would get the ship out of Aden harbor and to the BLUE MARLIN. As most of COLE'S Sailors were taken to the USS TARAWA, I stayed behind to provide support. I'm glad I did. The damage to the ship was much more than was known and some of the Sailors who had remained onboard needed support.

There were other times that I ministered to the crew, on board the USS TARAWA, en-route to Oman, and even from Frankfurt, Germany, home. When we touched down in Norfolk, I was able to meet with many of the injured who had been sent home. I also visited the hospital and ministered to the COLE Sailors there. Through it all, God was my strength and might. After it is all said and done, I marvel at the courage of the COLE crew and continued to be inspired. I will always remember their tenacity and their drive, and especially their compassion for one another.

## New Resources available from the United States Catholic Conference

The following resources have recently been released:

### **Penitential Practices for Today's Catholics**

Presents a summary of the Church's penitential practices, along with a brief exhortation to cultivate a penitential attitude in one's daily life.

### **Methodist-Catholic Dialogues: Thirty Years of Mission and Witness**

Recognizing that what binds Methodists and Catholics together is far greater than what divides them, these two groups have been in continuous dialogue since 1966. This publication articulates the common vision of this pilgrimage and the many achievements to date.

For these and other resources, contact USCC Publishing Services at (800) 235-8722.

## Couple makes "The Story of Jesus for Children" available to military chaplains at no cost.



A couple has donated funds to Campus Crusade's Military Ministry in order to make the popular video, "The Story of Jesus for Children" available to military chaplains.

To obtain a copy call:  
1-800-444-6006 ext 77,  
or email :  
joan.momany@milmin.com

*Notes from the Detailer*

BY CAPT BOB BURT,CHC, USN



My first assignment as a chaplain was at the Naval Hospital, Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico. The chaplain I relieved had retired two months before I arrived. Turnover consisted of a cassette tape, some hand-written notes, the "files," and an RP2 who was my salvation. I loved my hospital tour! Anyway, at 33 years of age, I joined the command basketball team, played the point guard and was voted in as team captain. Needless to say, the new chaplain had found an inroad. Well, we won the league, the Caribbean area championship, and went to Charleston for the Southern Regionals. Two weeks before the scheduled trip, HM2 Sam Johnson, our 6'3" leading rebounder told me he was transferring and wouldn't be able to play in the regionals. Even a plea from me couldn't get the Detailer to modify the orders.

Softball was next. I was player-coach and again, we won the league, Caribbean area championship, and were heading to Mayport for the Southern Regionals. Two weeks prior to our trip, our lead-off Dental Tech, who just happened to have the highest batting average on the team, transferred. My pleading with the Detailer fell on deaf ears. What is it with Detailers? Don't they grasp the necessity of modifying orders when championships are at stake?

Well, here I am, 19 years later. One month in the office and still waiting for my first chaplain to call for an extension request to play in area or regional playoffs. Based on my

experience, I would consider approval. Well, maybe not. But what are legitimate reasons for requesting extensions and what length of extensions are considered?

Significant health issues with an immediate family member would be a legitimate reason. Trying to get into a PRD zone to be considered for Funded Graduate Education (FGE), Pastoral Care Residency (PCR) or Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) might be another. Requesting to extend in order to complete a deployment warms my heart. Requests should be made as far out as possible, and certainly before your PRD window opens. Extension requests up to six months are easiest to process, longer requests will take an official chain of command course of action with command endorsement.

What are reasons that we would **not** consider legitimate? Well, owning a house in the area is one. "My spouse has a great job," is another. "My show dogs are entered in a high visibility competition," won't fly. "I really like what I'm doing," is commendable, but not extension worthy. Just a reminder, the operative word in the whole process is REQUEST. Nothing is automatic. Even when your CO signs, the needs of the Navy and CHC will prevail.

Hey, for RP1 Schadler, CDR McGeory and myself, keep us in your prayers and we'll keep trying to make your dreams come true.



**Congratulations to the following Navy chaplains  
who were selected to receive the 2001 MCA  
Distinguished Service Award**

**LCDR Timothy Overturf, CHC, USN (Navy)**

**LT Brian Stamm, CHC, USNR (USMC)**

**LT Dennis Boyle, CHC, USNR (USCG).**



# The Navy Chaplain

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*July-August      Technology and Ministry*

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